AFTER THE MILBURN REPORT

Milburn's Shared Record Is the Right Idea, Wrongly Designed

No state can run a welfare system that is fraud-proof and fair, let alone one with sufficient imagination to make a new Social Contract, without running it on its own blockchain ledger. The Milburn report, and the Prime Minister's wish to extend it to every age, show why.

Get the record right to build "A Democracy of Talents".

David Clancy · ROCKR Proof Labs · 18 November 2026

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SIX THINGS THE REPORT LEAVES OPEN

Who writes the record.
Each entry is written by the body it describes. Presence is reported, never attested.

Money on what it says.
Funding is tied to outcomes that the paid body records.

Privacy by promise.
A dataset of names, behind a legal firewall a later government can repeal.

Nothing in the person’s hand.
They hold no proof of their own.

Size.
Authorities ten times the size of the Dutch ones the report learns from.

Now for every age.
The Prime Minister wants it beyond 25: a record for life.

The right idea

Alan Milburn’s report, published on 17 November, proposes one shared record of every young person’s path through education, training and work. That is the right idea.

Our argument is about what the record has to be made of. If money is paid on what it says, and if it is to follow a person through a working life, it has to be a **blockchain ledger**: written at the door, kept jointly so that no single institution can rewrite it, and carrying no names.

A database with a legal promise attached will not hold.

1

Who writes the record

The report’s shared dataset links what colleges, training providers, employers and agencies already record about themselves. Nothing is written at the door by anyone else.

Its own evidence shows why that matters. More than half of 16 and 17-year-olds in further education had attendance below 90 per cent this spring, and, in its words:

> **“A young person can remain enrolled on paper while becoming detached in practice.”**

On a blockchain ledger the entry is written when a person taps a digital identity wallet at the door, signed by two parties, neither of whom is paid on it.

2

Money on what it says

The report ties funding to outcomes: for colleges, for providers, for employers who keep a young person on, and for places that bring inactivity down. It does not say how any single record of attendance or outcome would be checked.

Sweden shows what follows when the body that is paid also writes the attendance record. Six of its ten largest providers were terminated for fraud in 2025 and 2026.

> A blockchain ledger is kept jointly by the funder, the auditor and the authorities, so no single institution can write it alone or rewrite it afterwards.

3

Privacy by promise

The dataset would hold individual-level information drawn from education, benefits, earnings, health and other services. The report sees the danger and proposes:

> **“a legal firewall so that what is gathered to help a young person cannot be reused for benefit sanctions”**

That is a promise in law about a dataset that holds names. The Dutch, whom the report admires, have already seen such data turned on their own citizens by algorithm, struck down in court, and a government fall over it.

> The ledger’s entry shows that a real person was present and carries no name. There is nothing in it to turn against anyone.

4

Nothing in the person’s hand

In the report’s design a common identifier lets the state follow a young person from college to provider to employer. The young person holds nothing.

They cannot show an employer, or another country, what they have done, except by asking the state to say so. Nor does the report propose a digital identity, which Britain still lacks and every such system needs first.

> On the ledger the record belongs to the person: the record of the skills and achievements they have built, theirs to hold and theirs to show.

5

Size

The report says it is “learning from the Dutch system”, where 4.8 per cent of young people are out of education, work and training against Britain’s 13.6.

600

eighteen-year-olds a year in an average Dutch municipality

30,000+

in Greater Manchester alone

The Dutch pair their national record with a youth desk in every town, small enough for an adviser to know each young person. The report makes England’s strategic authorities responsible for the whole 16-to-24 system.

6

Now for every age

On the day of publication the Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, told *The Times*, as ITV News reported it:

> **“I think the same philosophy could apply right through the age range.”**

That changes what the record is. A record that follows a person from a first course at fourteen to a last shift at seventy becomes the terms of a new social contract.

Trust in a keeper, a payee and a promise may be tolerable for a two-year programme. It is not tolerable for a lifetime.

THE PRIZE

Building a democracy of talents

A 40-year-old who needs a new skill does not need a youth adviser. They need a way to find the course, the teacher and the ten other people who want the same thing.

On the state’s own blockchain ledger, the open source ROCKR application can do that. Anyone can propose a course or an activity: a group of learners, a teacher with a spare evening, an employer, a shopkeeper.

It goes ahead once enough verified people have committed to turn up. Delivery is confirmed by someone other than the party being paid. Whoever staged it is paid when that is done.

THE PRIZE

People procure their own learning

Public money follows demand that has already been committed. Each session attended and each level passed is added to the record of the skills and achievements that person has built.

Daniel Karyotis, the French banker, has a name for a country that judges people on what they can demonstrably do, over a working life, in place of the diploma they held at twenty-two: **a democracy of talents.**

None of it is a condition of the first step. All of it depends on the first step being a record nobody can rewrite.

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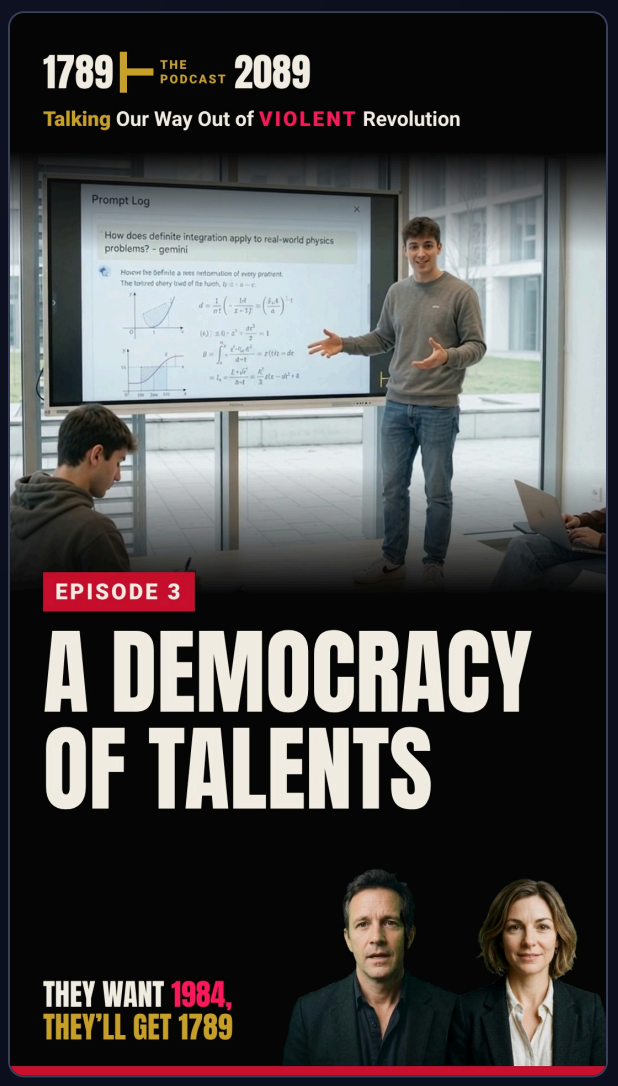
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A Democracy of Talents

On YouTube, search **1789-2089 podcast**
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READ THE REFERENCE CASE

What the Netherlands does, and what the Milburn report still leaves out

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Declaration of interest. I am the founder and chief architect of the ROCKR programme, and I wrote the reference case and produced the podcast. The two hosts are AI-generated. The proofs behind the proposal are for a mathematical model: all eighteen of its eighteen statements have been checked by machine, in the proof language Lean 4. Nothing described is yet a running system; an internal test network is targeted for early 2027. Nothing has been awarded; nothing is payable by anyone unless it is. Two research bids are currently before ARIA, the UK's Advanced Research and Invention Agency.